2

THREE SERMONS

ON THE

Original, Nature, Properties, *and* Uſe

OF THE

LAW,

AND

Its ESTABLISHMENT thro' FAITH.

By JOHN WESLEY, A. M.

The LORD *is well pleaſed for his Righteouſneſs Sake,*
He will magnify the Law, *and make it honourable.*
ISAIAH xlii. 21.

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SERMON I.

The Original, Nature, Properties and Uſe of the LAW.

ROM. vii. 12.

Wherefore the Law is holy, and the Commandment holy, and juſt, and good.

PERHAPS there are few ſubjects within the whole compaſs of religion, ſo little underſtood as this. The reader of this epiſtle is uſually told, by *the Law* St. *Paul* means the *Jewiſh Law:* and ſo apprehending himſelf to have no concern therewith, paſſes on without farther thought about it. Indeed ſome are not ſatisfied with this account: But obſerving the epiſtle is directed to the *Romans*, thence infer, that the apoſtle in the beginning of this chapter, alludes to the old *Roman Law.* But as they have no more concern with this, than with the *Ceremonial Law* of *Moſes*, ſo they ſpend not much thought, on what they ſuppoſe is occaſionally mentioned, barely to illuſtrate another thing.

2. But a careful obſerver of the Apoſtle's diſcourſe, will not be content with theſe ſlight explications of it. And the more he weighs the words, the more convinced he will be, that St. *Paul* by *the law* mentioned in this chapter, does not mean either the ancient law of *Rome*, or the ceremonial law of *Moſes*. This will clearly appear to all who attentively conſider the tenor of his diſcourſe. He begins the chapter, *Know ye not,*

Brethren, (for I ſpeak to them that know the Law, (to them who have been inſtructed therein from their youth) *That the Law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?* v. 1. (What the law of *Rome* only, or the *Ceremonial* law? No ſurely; but the *Moral* law) *for,* to give a plain inſtance, *the woman that hath an huſband, is bound by the* (moral) *law to her huſband as long as he liveth. But if her huſband be dead, ſhe is looſed from the law of her huſband,* v. 2. *So then, if while her huſband liveth, ſhe be married to another man, ſhe ſhall be called an Adultereſs: but if her huſband be dead, ſhe is free from that law, ſo that ſhe is no Adultereſs, tho' ſhe be married to another man.* v. 3. From this particular inſtance the Apoſtle proceeds to draw that general concluſion. *Wherefore, my brethren,* by a plain parity of reaſon, *ye alſo are become dead to the law,* the whole *Moſaic* inſtitution, *by the Body of Chriſt* offered for you, and bringing you under a new diſpenſation; *That ye ſhould* without any blame *be married to another, even to him who is raiſed from the dead,* and hath thereby given proof of his authority to make the change, *that ye ſhould bring forth fruit unto God.* v. 4. And this we can do now, whereas before we could not: *For when we were in the fleſh,* under the power of the fleſh, that is, of corrupt nature (which was neceſſarily the caſe till we knew the power of Chriſt's reſurrection) *the motions of ſins, which were by the law,* which were ſhewn and inflamed by the *Moſaic* law, not conquered, *did work in our members,* broke out various ways, *to bring forth fruit unto death.* v. 5. *But now we are delivered from the Law,* from that whole moral as well as ceremonial œconomy; *that being dead whereby we were held:* that intire inſtitution being now as it were dead, and having no more authority over us, than the huſband when dead hath over his wife: *that we ſhould ſerve him* who died for us and roſe again, *in newneſs of ſpirit,* in a new ſpiritual diſpenſation, *and not in the oldneſs of the letter,* v. 6. with a bare outward ſervice, according to the letter of the *Moſaic* inſtitution.

3. The Apoſtle having gone thus far, in proving that the Chriſtian had ſet aſide the Jewiſh diſpenſation, and that the Moral law itſelf, though it could neve

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paſs away, yet ſtood on a different foundation from what it did before, now ſtops to propoſe and anſwer an objection. *What ſhall we ſay then? Is the law ſin?* So ſome might infer from a miſapprehenſion of thoſe words, *the motions of ſin which were by the law. GOD forbid!* ſaith the Apoſtle, that we ſhould ſay ſo. Nay, the law is an irreconcileable enemy to ſin; ſearching out wherever it is. *I had not known ſin but by the law. I had not known luſt*, evil deſire to be ſin, *except the law had ſaid, Thou ſhalt not covet*, v. 7. After opening this farther in the four following verſes, he ſubjoins this general concluſion, with regard more eſpecially to the Moral law, from which the preceding inſtance was taken: *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and juſt, and good.*

4. In order to explain and inforce theſe deep words, ſo little regarded, becauſe ſo little underſtood, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, Firſt, The Original of this law, Secondly, The Nature thereof; Thirdly, The Properties, that it is *holy, and juſt, and good*, and Fourthly, The Uſes of it.

I. 1. I ſhall Firſt, endeavour to ſhew the Original of the Moral law, often called *the Law*, by way of eminence. Now this is not, as ſome may poſſibly have imagined, of ſo late an inſtitution as the time of *Moſes*. *Noah* declared it to men long before that time, and *Enoch* before him. But we may trace its Original higher ſtill, even beyond the Foundation of the World, to that period, unknown indeed to men, but doubtleſs inrolled in the annals of Eternity, when *the morning Stars* firſt *ſang together*, being newly called to exiſtence. It pleaſed the great Creator to make theſe his firſt-born Sons, intelligent Beings, that they might know him that created them. For this end, he endued them with underſtanding, to diſcern truth from falſhood, good from evil: And as a neceſſary reſult of this, with liberty, a capacity of chuſing the one, and refuſing the other. By this they were likewiſe enabled to offer him a free and willing ſervice; a ſervice rewardable in itſelf, as well as moſt acceptable to their gracious maſter.

2. To employ all the faculties which he had given them, particularly their understanding and liberty, he gave them a law, a compleat model of all truth, so far as intelligible to a finite Being, and of all good, so far as Angelic minds were capable of embracing it. It was also the design of their beneficent Governor herein, to make way for a continual increase of their happiness: Seeing every instance of obedience to that law, would both add to the perfection of their nature, and intitle them to an higher reward, which the righteous Judge would give in its season.

3. In like manner, when God in his appointed time, had created a new order of intelligent Beings, when he had raised man from the dust of the earth, breathed into him the breath of life, and caused him to become a living soul, endued with power to chuse good or evil: He gave to this free, intelligent creature, the same law as to his first-born children: Not wrote indeed upon tables of stone, or any corruptible substance, but engraven on his heart by the finger of God, wrote in the inmost Spirit both of men and angels: to the intent it might never be far off, never hard to be understood; but always at hand, and always shining with clear light, even as the Sun in the midst of Heaven.

4. Such was the Original of the law of God. With regard to man, it was co-eval with his nature. But with regard to the elder Sons of God, it shone in its full splendor, *or ever the mountains were brought forth, or the Earth and the round world were made.* But it was not long before man rebelled against God, and by breaking this glorious law, well nigh effaced it out of his heart; *the eyes of his understanding* being *darkened*, in the same measure as his soul was *alienated from the Life of God.* And yet God did not despise the work of his own hands: But being reconciled to man thro' the Son of his love, he in some measure re-inscribed his law, on the heart of his dark, sinful creature. *He* again *shewed thee, O man what is good* (altho' not as in the beginning) *even to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

5. And

5. And this he ſhewed not only to our firſt parents, but likewiſe to all their poſterity, by *that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world.* But notwithſtanding this light, all fleſh had in proceſs of time *corrupted their way before him*: 'till he choſe out of mankind a peculiar people, to whom he gave a more perfect knowledge of his law. And the heads of this, becauſe they were ſlow of underſtanding, he wrote on two tables of ſtone: which he commanded the fathers to teach their children, thro' all ſucceeding generations.

6. And thus it is, that the law of God is now made known to them that know not God. They hear, with the hearing of the ear, the things that were written aforetime for our inſtruction. But this does not ſuffice. They cannot by this means comprehend the height and depth and length and breadth thereof. God alone can reveal this by his Spirit. And ſo he does to all that truly believe, in conſequence of that gracious promiſe, made to all the Iſrael of God: *Behold, the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the houſe of Iſrael. And this ſhall be the Covenant that I will make, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they ſhall be my people.* Jer. xxxi. 31. &c.

II. 1. The nature of that law which was originally given to angels in heaven and man in Paradiſe, and which God has ſo mercifully promiſed to write afreſh, in the hearts of all true believers, was the ſecond thing I propoſed to ſhew. In order to which I would firſt obſerve, That altho' *the Law* and *the Commandment* are ſometimes indifferently taken, (the Commandment meaning but a part of the Law) yet in the text they are uſed as equivalent terms, implying one and the ſame thing. But we cannot underſtand here, either by one or the other, the ceremonial Law. 'Tis not the ceremonial Law, whereof the apoſtle ſays, in the words above-recited, *I had not known ſin, but by the Law:* this is too plain to need a proof. Neither is it the ceremonial

ceremonial Law which ſaith, in the words immediately ſubjoined, *Thou ſhalt not covet.* Therefore the ceremonial Law, has no place in the preſent queſtion.

2. Neither can we underſtand by the Law mentioned in the text, the *Moſaic* diſpenſation. 'Tis true, the word is ſometimes ſo underſtood: as when the Apoſtle ſays, ſpeaking to the *Galatians*, (ch. iii. *v.* 17.) *The covenant which was confirmed before* (namely with *Abraham* the father of the faithful) *the Law*, i. e. the *Moſaic* Diſpenſation, *which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot diſannul.* But it cannot be ſo underſtood in the text; for the Apoſtle never beſtows, ſo high commendations as theſe upon that imperfect and ſhadowy diſpenſation. He no where affirms, the *Moſaic* to be a *ſpiritual* Law: or, that it is *holy and juſt and good.* Neither is it true, that God will *write* that Law *in the* hearts of them whoſe *iniquities he remembers no more.* It remains that the *Law*, eminently ſo termed, is no other than the moral Law.

3. Now this Law is an incorruptible picture of the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity. It is He whom in his eſſence no man hath ſeen or can ſee, made viſible to men and angels. It is the face of God unveil'd: God manifeſted to his creatures as they are able to bear it: manifeſted to give and not to deſtroy life; that they may ſee God and live. It is the heart of God diſcloſed to man. Yea, in ſome ſenſe we may apply to this Law, what the Apoſtle ſays of his ſon, it is απαυγασμα της δοξης, και χαρακτηρ της υποστασεως αυτε, *The ſtreaming forth* or outbeaming *of his Glory, the expreſs image of his perſon.*

4. "If virtue, ſaid the antient Heathen, could aſſume ſuch a ſhape as that we could behold her with our eyes, what wonderful love would ſhe excite in us!" If Virtue could do this! It is done already. The Law of God is all virtues in one, in ſuch a ſhape, as to be beheld with open face, by all thoſe whoſe eyes God hath enlightened. What is the Law, but divine virtue and wiſdom, aſſuming a viſible form? What is it but the original ideas of truth and good, which were lodged

lged in the uncreated mind from eternity, now awn forth and cloathed with ſuch a vehicle, as to ap-ar even to human underſtanding?

5. If we ſurvey the Law of God in another point of ew, it is ſupreme, unchangeable reaſon: it is unal-rable rectitude: it is the everlaſting fitneſs of all ings that are or ever were created. I am ſenſible, hat ſhortneſs, and even impropriety there is, in theſe d all other human expreſſions, when we endeavour theſe faint pictures, to ſhadow out the deep things God. Nevertheleſs we have no better, indeed no her way, during this our infant ſtate of exiſtence. s *we* now *know* but *in part*, ſo *we* are conſtrained to *ophesy*, i. e. ſpeak of the things of God, *in part* alſo. *e cannot order our ſpeech by reaſon of darkneſs*, while we e in this houſe of clay. While I am *a child I* muſt *eak as a child*. But I ſhall ſoon *put away childiſh things*. or *when that which is perfect is come, that which is in rt ſhall be done away*.

6. But to return. The Law of God, (ſpeaking ter the manner of men) is a copy of the eternal ind, a tranſcript of the divine Nature: yea it is the ireſt offſpring of the everlaſting Father, the bright-t efflux of his eſſential Wiſdom, the viſible Beauty the Moſt High. It is the Delight and Wonder of herubim and Seraphim and all the company of heav-n, and the Glory and Joy of every wiſe believer, very well-inſtructed child of God upon earth.

III. 1. Such is the Nature of the ever-bleſſed Law God. I am, in the third place, to ſhew the Proper-es of it: Not all; for that would exceed the wiſ-om of an angel. But thoſe only which are mentioned the text. Theſe are three: He *is Holy, juſt, and ood*. And firſt, *The Law is holy*.

2. In this expreſſion the apoſtle does not appear to eak of its effects, but rather of its Nature: as St. *ames* ſpeaking of the ſame thing under another name, ys, *The Wiſdom from above* (which is no other than his Law written in our heart) *is firſt pure*, ch. iii, 17, ἁγνὴ, chaſte, ſpotleſs, internally, and eſſentially holy.

And

And conſequently, when it is tranſcribed into the Life, as well as the ſoul, (it is as the ſame apoſtle terms it) chap. i. 27, θρησκεια καθαρα και αμιαντος, *pure religion and undefiled*; or, the pure, clean, unpolluted worſhip of God.

3. It is indeed in the higheſt degree, pure, chaſte, clean, holy. Otherwiſe it could not be the immediate offſpring, and much leſs the expreſs reſemblance of God, who is eſſential Holineſs. It is pure from all ſin, clean and unſpotted from any touch of evil. It is a chaſte Virgin, incapable of any defilement, of any mixture with that which is unclean or unholy. It has no fellowſhip with ſin of any kind. For *what communion hath light with darkneſs?* As Sin is in its very nature enmity to God, ſo his Law is enmity to Sin.

4. Therefore it is, that the apoſtle rejects with ſuch abhorrence that blaſphemous ſuppoſition, that *the Law* of God *is* either *Sin* itſelf, or the Cauſe of Sin. *God forbid*, that we ſhould ſuppoſe it is the Cauſe of Sin, becauſe it is the Diſcoverer of it: becauſe it detects the hidden things of darkneſs, and drags them out into open day. 'Tis true, by this means, (as the apoſtle obſerves, verſe 13) *Sin appears to be Sin.* All its diſguiſes are torn away, and it appears in its native deformity. 'Tis true likewiſe, that *Sin by the commandment becomes exceeding ſinful.* Being now committed againſt light and knowledge, being ſtript even of the poor plea of Ignorance, it loſes its excuſe as well as diſguiſe, and becomes far more odious both to God and man. Yea, and it is true, that *Sin worketh death by that which is good*, which itſelf is pure and holy. When it is dragged out to light, it rages the more: when it is reſtrained, it burſts out with greater violence. Thus the apoſtle, (ſpeaking in the perſon of one, who was convinced of ſin, but not yet delivered from it) *Sin taking occaſion by the commandment*, detecting and endeavouring to reſtrain it, diſdained the reſtraint, and ſo much the more *wrought in me all manner of concupiſcence*, verſe 8, all manner of fooliſh and hurtful deſire, which that commandment ſought to reſtrain. Thus *when the commandment came, Sin revived*, ver

erſe 9, it fretted and raged the more. But this no ſtain on the commandment. Tho' it is abuſed it annot be defiled. This only proves, that the *heart* f man *is deſperately wicked.* But the *Law* of God is *oly* ſtill.

5. And it is, Secondly, *juſt.* It renders to all their ue. It preſcribes exactly what is right, preciſely hat ought to be done, ſaid, or thought, both with egard to the Author of our being, with regard to urſelves, and with regard to every creature which he as made. It is adapted in all reſpects to the nature f things, of the whole univerſe and every individual. t is ſuited to all the circumſtances of each, and to all heir mutual relations, whether ſuch as have exiſted rom the beginning, or ſuch as commenced in any ollowing period. It is exactly agreeable to the fitneſ- es of things, whether eſſential or accidental. It claſh- s with none of theſe in any degree; nor is ever un- onnected with them. If the word be taken in that enſe, there is nothing *arbitrary* in the Law of God. ltho' ſtill the whole and every part thereof, is total- y dependent upon his will: So that *thy will be done*, is he ſupreme, univerſal Law both in earth and heaven.

6. "But is the Will of God the Cauſe of his Law? s his Will the Original of Right and Wrong? Is a hing therefore right, becauſe God wills it? Or does e will it, becauſe it is right?"

I fear, this celebrated queſtion is more curious than ſeful. And perhaps, in the manner it is uſually reated of, it does not ſo well conſiſt with the regard hat is due from a Creature, to the Creator and Gover- or of all things. 'Tis hardly decent from Man, to all the ſupreme God, to give an account to him! Neverthele ſs, with awe and reverence we may ſpeak little. The Lord pardon us, if we ſpeak amiſs!

7. It ſeems then, that the whole difficulty ariſes, rom conſidering God's will as diſtinct from God. Otherwiſe it vaniſhes away. For none can doubt, but God is the cauſe of the law of God. But the will of God is God himſelf. It is God conſidered as willing hus or thus. Conſequently, to ſay, That the will of God

God, or that God himſelf is the cauſe of the law, i one and the ſame thing.

8. Again, If the law, the immutable rule of righ and wrong, depends on the nature and fitneſſes o things, and on their eſſential relations to each other (I do not ſay their eternal relations; becauſe th eternal relations of things exiſting in time, is little le than a Contradiction :) If, I ſay, this depends on th nature and relations of things, then it muſt depend o God, or the will of God: Becauſe thoſe things them ſelves, with all their relations, are the work of hi hands. By his will, *for his pleaſure* alone, *they* all *a and were created.*

9. And yet it may be granted (which is probabl all that a conſiderate perſon would contend for) tha in every particular caſe, God wills this or this (ſuppoſ that men ſhould honour their parents) becauſe it i right, agreeable to the fitneſs of things, to the relatio wherein they ſtand.

10. The law then is right and juſt concerning a things. And it is *good* as well as *juſt*. This we ma eaſily infer from the fountain whence it flowed. Fo what was this, but the goodneſs of God? What bu goodneſs alone inclined him to impart that divin copy of himſelf to the holy angels? To what elſe ca we impute his beſtowing upon man the ſame tranſcrip of his own nature? And what but tender love conſtrain ed him afreſh to manifeſt his will to fallen man? Eithe to *Adam*, or any of his ſeed, who like him were *con ſhort of the glory of God?* Was it not mere love that mo ved him to publiſh his law, after the underſtandings o men were darkened? And to ſend his prophets to de clare that law to the blind, thoughtleſs children of men Doubtleſs his goodneſs it was which raiſed up *Enoc* and *Noah*, to be preachers of righteouſneſs; whic cauſed *Abraham* his friend, and *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, t bear witneſs to his truth. It was his goodneſs alon which when *darkneſs* had *covered the earth, and thick dar neſs the people*, gave a written law to *Moſes*, and throug him, to the nation whom he had choſen. It was h love which explained theſe living oracles by *Dav* an

and all the prophets that followed: Until, when the fulneſs of time was come, he ſent his only-begotten Son, *not to deſtroy the law but to fulfil*, to confirm every jot and tittle thereof, till having wrote it in the hearts of all his children, and put all his enemies under his feet *he ſhall deliver up* his mediatorial *kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.*

11. And this law which the goodneſs of God gave at firſt, and has preſerved thro' all ages, is, like the fountain from whence it ſprings, full of goodneſs and benignity: It is mild and kind; it is (as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it) *ſweeter than honey and the honey-comb.* It is winning and amiable. It includes *whatſoever things are lovely or of good report. If there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe* before God and his holy angels, they are all compriſed in this: Wherein are hid all the treaſures of the divine wiſdom and knowledge and love.

12. And it is *good* in its effects, as well as in its nature. As the tree is, ſo are its fruits. The fruits of the law of God written in the heart, are *righteouſneſs and peace and aſſurance for ever.* Or rather the law itſelf is righteouſneſs, filling the ſoul with a peace that paſſeth all underſtanding, and cauſing us to rejoice evermore, in the teſtimony of a good conſcience toward God. It is not ſo properly a pledge, as *an earneſt of our inheritance*, being a part of the purchaſed poſſeſſion it is God made manifeſt in our fleſh, and bringing with him eternal life; aſſuring us by that pure and perfect love, that we are *ſealed unto the day of redemption*: that he will *ſpare us as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him, in the day when he maketh up his Jewels*, and that there remaineth for us *a crown of glory which fadeth not away.*

IV. 1. It remains only, To ſhew, in the fourth and laſt place, the uſes of the law. And the firſt uſe of it without queſtion is, to convince the world of Sin. This is indeed the peculiar work of the Holy Ghoſt: Who can work it without any means at all, or by whatever means it pleaſeth him, however inſufficient in themſelves, or even improper to produce ſuch an effect. And

And accordingly ſome there are whoſe hearts have been broken in pieces in a moment, either in ſickneſs or in health, without any viſible caaſe, or any outward means whatever. And others (one in an age) have been awakened to a ſenſe of the *wrath of God abiding on* them, by hearing, That *God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf.* But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God, to convict ſinners by the law. It is this, which being ſet home on the conſcience, generally breaketh the rocks in pieces. It is more eſpecially this part of *the word of God*, which *is ζων και ενεργης, quick and powerful*, full of life and energy, *and ſharper than any two-edged ſword.* This in the hand of God and of thoſe whom he hath ſent, *pierces* thro' all the folds of a deceitful heart, and *divides aſunder even the ſoul and ſpirit*, yea, as it were, the very *joints and marrow.* By this is the ſinner diſcovered to himſelf. All his Fig-leaves are torn away, and he ſees that he is *wretched and poor and miſerable and blind and naked.* The law flaſhes conviction on every ſide. He feels himſelf a mere ſinner. He has nothing to pay. His *mouth is ſtopt*, and he ſtands *guilty before God.*

2. To ſlay the ſinner is then the firſt uſe of the law; to deſtroy the life and ſtrength wherein he truſts, and convince him that he is dead while he liveth; not only under ſentence of death, but actually dead unto God, void of all ſpiritual life, *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.* The ſecond uſe of it is, to bring him unto life, unto Chriſt, that he may live. 'Tis true, in performing both theſe offices, it acts the part of a ſevere ſchoolmaſter. It drives us by force, rather than draws us by love. And yet love is the ſpring of all. It is the ſpirit of love, which by this painful means, tears away our confidence in the fleſh, which leaves us no broken reed whereon to truſt, and ſo conſtrains the ſinner ſtript of all, to cry out in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, or groan in the depth of his heart,

" I give up every plea beſide,
" Lord, I am damn'd—But thou haſt died.

3. T

3. The third uſe of the law is, to keep us alive. It is the grand means whereby the bleſſed Spirit prepares the believer for larger communications of the life of God.

I am afraid this great and important truth is little underſtood, not only by the world, but even by many whom God hath taken out of the world, who are real children of God by faith. Many of theſe lay it down as an unqueſtioned truth, that when we come to Chriſt, we have done with the law; and that in *this* ſenſe, *Chriſt is the end of the law, to every one that believeth.* "*The end of the law!*" So he is, *for righteouſneſs*, for juſtification *to every one that believeth.* Herein the law is at an end. It juſtifies none; but only brings them to Chriſt. Who is alſo in another reſpect, *the end* or ſcope *of the* law, the point at which it continually aims. But when it has brought us to him, it has yet a farther office, namely, To keep us with him. For it is continually exciting all believers, the more they ſee of its height and depth, and length and breadth, to exhort one another ſo much the more,

"Cloſer and cloſer let us cleave
To his belov'd embrace:
Expect his fulneſs to receive,
And Grace to anſwer grace."

4. Allowing then that every believer has done with the law, as it means the *Jewiſh* ceremonial law, or the entire *Moſaic* diſpenſation (for theſe *Chriſt hath taken out of the way*) Yea, allowing we have done with the moral law, as a means of procuring our juſtification (for we are *juſtified freely by his grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jeſus*) Yet in another ſenſe, we have not done with this law. For it is ſtill of unſpeakable uſe, Firſt, in convincing us of the ſin that yet remains both in our hearts and lives, and thereby keeping us cloſe to Chriſt, that his blood may cleanſe us every moment; Secondly, in deriving ſtrength from our head into his living members, whereby he impowers them to do what his law commands; and Thirdly, in confirming our hope of

whatſoever it commands, and we have not yet attained, of receiving grace upon grace, till we are in actual poſſeſſion of the fulneſs of his promiſes.

5. How clearly does this agree with the experience of every true believer! While he cries out, *O what love have I unto thy law! all the day long is my ſtudy in it:* He ſees daily in that divine mirror, more and more of his own ſinfulneſs. He ſees more and more clearly, that he is ſtill a ſinner in all things; that neither his heart nor his ways, are right before God. And that every moment ſends him to Chriſt. This ſhews him the meaning of what is written, *Thou ſhalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, Holineſs to the Lord. And it ſhall be upon Aaron's forehead* (the type of our great High Prieſt) *that Aaron may bear the iniquities of the holy things, which the children of Iſrael ſhall hallow, in all their holy gifts:* (ſo far are our prayers or holy things from atoning for the reſt of our ſins!) *And it ſhall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.* Exodus xxviii. 36, 38.

6. To explain this by a ſingle inſtance. The law ſays, *Thou ſhalt not kill*, and hereby (as our Lord teaches) forbids not only outward acts, but every unkind word or thought. Now the more I look into this perfect law, the more I feel how far I come ſhort of it: And the more I feel this, the more I feel my need of his blood to atone for all my ſin: and of his ſpirit to purify my heart, and make me *perfect and entire, lacking nothing.*

7. Therefore I cannot ſpare the law one moment, no more than I can ſpare Chriſt: Seeing I now want it as much, to keep me to Chriſt, as ever I wanted it to bring me to him. Otherwiſe, this *evil heart of unbelief*, would immediately *depart from the living God.* Indeed each is continually ſending me to the other, the law to Chriſt, and Chriſt to the law. On the one hand, the height and depth of the law conſtrain me to fly to the love of God in Chriſt. On the other, the love of God in Chriſt, endears the law to me *above gold or precious ſtones:* Seeing I know every part of it is a gracious promiſe, which my Lord will fulfil in its ſeaſon.

8. Wh

8. Who art thou then, O man, that *judgeſt the law, and ſpeakeſt evil of the law?* That rankeſt it with ſin, Satan and death, and ſendeſt them all to hell together! The Apoſtle *James* eſteemed *judging* or *ſpeaking evil of the law*, ſo enormous a piece of wickedneſs, that he knew not how to aggravate the guilt of judging our brethren, more than by ſhewing it included this. *So now*, ſays he, *thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge!* A judge of that which God hath ordained to judge thee. So thou haſt ſet up thyſelf in the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, and caſt down the rule whereby he will judge the world! O take knowledge what advantage Satan hath gained over thee! And for the time to come never think or ſpeak lightly of, much leſs dreſs up as a Scare-crow, this bleſſed inſtrument of the grace of God. Yea, love and value it for the ſake of him from whom it came, and of him to whom it leads. Let it be thy glory and joy, next to the croſs of Chriſt: Declare its praiſe and make it honourable before all men.

9. And if thou art throughly convinced, That it is the offspring of God, that it is the copy of all his imitable perfections, and that *it is holy and juſt and good*, but eſpecially to them that believe: Then inſtead of caſting it away as a polluted thing, ſee that thou cleave to it more and more. Never let the law of mercy and truth, of love to God and man, of lowlineſs, meekneſs and purity forſake thee. *Bind it about thy neck: Write it on the table of thy heart.* Keep cloſe to the law, if thou wilt keep cloſe to Chriſt: Hold it faſt: Let it not go. Let this continually lead thee to the atoning blood, continually confirm thy hope, till all *the righteouſneſs of the law is fulfilled in* thee, and thou art *filled with all the fulneſs of God.*

10. And if thy Lord hath already fulfilled his word, if he hath already *written his law in thy heart*, then *ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made thee free.* Thou art not only made free from *Jewiſh* ceremonies, from the guilt of ſin and the fear of hell: (Theſe are ſo far from being the whole, that they are the leaſt and loweſt part of chriſtian liberty:) but what is infinitely

more, from the power of ſin, from ſerving the devil, from offending God. O ſtand faſt in this liberty, in compariſon of which, all the reſt is not even worthy to be named. Stand faſt in loving God with all thy heart, and ſerving him with all thy ſtrength. This is perfect freedom; thus to keep his law, and to walk in all his commandments blameleſs. *Be not intangled again with the yoke of bondage.* I do not mean of *Jewiſh* bondage; nor yet of bondage to the fear of hell: Theſe, I truſt, are far from thee. But beware of being intangled again with the yoke of ſin, of any inward or outward tranſgreſſion of the law. Abhor ſin far more than death or hell; abhor ſin itſelf, far more than the puniſhment of it. Beware of the bondage of pride, of deſire, of anger; of every evil temper, or word, or work. *Look unto Jeſus*, and in order thereto, *look* more and more *into the perfect law, the law of liberty.* And *continue therein:* So ſhalt thou daily *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

SERMON

SERMON II.

The LAW eſtabliſhed thro' Faith.

ROM. iii. 31.

Do we then make void the Law thro' Faith? GOD forbid! Yea we eſtabliſh the Law.

1. SAINT *Paul* having in the beginning of this epiſtle, laid down his general propoſition, namely, That *the Goſpel of Chriſt is the Power of God unto ſalvation to every one that believeth:* the powerful means, whereby God makes every believer a partaker of preſent and eternal Salvation, goes on to ſhew, that there is no other way under heaven, whereby men can be ſaved. He ſpeaks particularly of ſalvation from the guilt of ſin, which he commonly terms juſtification. And that all men ſtood in need of this, that none could plead their own innocence, he proves at large by various arguments, addreſſed to the Jews as well as the Heathens. Hence he infers (in the nineteenth verſe of this chapter) that *every mouth*, whether Jew or Heathen *muſt be ſtopt* from excuſing or juſtifying himſelf, *and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore*, ſaith he, by his own obedience, *by the works of the Law, ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight*, verſe 20. *But now the righteouſneſs of God without the Law*, without our previous obedience thereto, *is manifeſted*, ver. 21. *Even the righteouſneſs of God, which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt, unto all and upon all that believe*, verſe 22. *For there is*

no difference, as to their need of Juſtification, or the manner wherein they attain it. *For all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God*, (*v.* 23.) the glorious image of God wherein they were created: And all (who attain) *are juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt*: verſe 24. *Whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood*—ver. 25. *That he might be juſt, and yet the Juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus*; verſe 26, that without any impeachment to his Juſtice, he might ſhew him mercy, for the ſake of that propitiation. *Therefore we conclude*, (which was the grand poſition he had undertaken to eſtabliſh) *That a man is juſtified by Faith, without the works of the Law*. verſe 28.

2. It was eaſy to foreſee an objection which might be made, and which has in fact been made in all ages: namely, That to ſay *we are juſtified without the works of the Law*, is to aboliſh the Law. The apoſtle without entering into a formal diſpute, ſimply denies the charge. *Do we then*, ſays he, *make void the Law through Faith? God forbid! Yea, we eſtabliſh the Law*.

3. The ſtrange imagination of ſome, that St. *Paul*, when he ſays, *A man is juſtified without the works of the Law*, means only the *Ceremonial* Law, is abundantly confuted by theſe very words. For did St. Paul *eſtabliſh* the *Ceremonial* Law? It is evident he did not. He did *make void* that Law through Faith, and openly avowed his doing ſo. It was the *Moral* Law only of which he might truly ſay, We do not make void but *eſtabliſh this through Faith*.

4. But all men are not herein of his mind. Many there are who will not agree to this. Many in all ages of the church, even among thoſe who bore the name of Chriſtians, have contended, That *the faith once delivered to the ſaints*, was deſigned to make void the whole Law. They would no more ſpare the moral than the ceremonial Law, but were for *hewing*, as it were, *both in pieces before the Lord*: vehemently maintaining, "If you eſtabliſh any Law, *Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing*; *Chriſt is become of no effect to you*: *ye are fallen from grace*."

5. But

5. But is the zeal of these men according to knowledge? Have they observed the connexion between the Law and Faith? and that considering that close connexion between them, to destroy one is indeed to destroy both? That to abolish the Moral Law is in truth to abolish Faith and the Law together? As leaving no proper means, either of bringing us to Faith, or of *stirring up that gift of God* in our soul.

6. It therefore behoves all who desire either to come to Christ, or to *walk in Him whom they have received*, to take heed how they *make void the Law through Faith*. To secure us effectually against which, let us inquire, First, Which are the most usual ways of *making void the Law through Faith*, and Secondly, How we may follow the apostle, and by Faith *establish the Law*.

I. 1. Let us, First, inquire, Which are the most usual ways of making *void the Law through Faith*. Now the way for a preacher to make it all void at a stroke, is, Not to preach it at all. This is just the same thing, as to blot it out of the oracles of God. More especially when it is done with design; when it is made a rule, "Not to preach the Law:" And the very phrase, "A Preacher of the Law," is used as a term of Reproach, as though it meant little less than, "an Enemy to the Gospel."

2. All this proceeds from the deepest ignorance of the Nature, Properties, and Use of the law; and proves that those who act thus, either know not Christ, are utter strangers to the living faith; or at least, that they are but Babes in Christ, and as such *unskilled in the word of Righteousness*.

3. Their grand plea is this: "That preaching the the gospel (that is, according to their judgment, the speaking of nothing but the sufferings and merits of Christ) answers all the ends of the law." But this we utterly deny. It does not answer the very first end of the law, namely, The convincing men of sin, the awakening those who are still asleep on the brink of hell. There may have been here and there an exempt case. One in a thousand may have been awakened by the

the goſpel. But this is no general rule. The ordinary method of God is, to convict ſinners by the law, and that only. The goſpel is not the means which God hath ordained, or which our Lord himſelf uſed, for this end. We have no authority in ſcripture for applying it thus, nor any ground to think it will prove effectual. Nor have we any more ground to expect this, from the nature of the thing. *They that be whole*, as our Lord himſelf obſerves, *need not a phyſician, but they that be ſick*. It is abſurd therefore to offer a phyſician to them that are whole, or that at leaſt imagine themſelves ſo to be. You are firſt, to convince them, that they are ſick. Otherwiſe they will not thank you for your labour. It is equally abſurd to offer Chriſt to them, whoſe heart is whole, having never yet been broken. It is in the proper ſenſe, *caſting pearls before ſwine*. Doubtleſs *they will trample them under foot*. And it is no more than you have reaſon to expect, if they alſo *turn again and rent you*.

4. "But altho' there is no command in ſcripture, to offer Chriſt to the careleſs ſinner, yet are there not ſcriptural precedents for it?" I think not: I know not any. I believe you can't produce one, either from the four evangeliſts, or the *Acts of the Apoſtles*. Neither can you prove this to have been the practice of any of the Apoſtles, from any paſſage in all their writings.

5. "Nay, does not the Apoſtle *Paul* ſay, in his former epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, *we preach Chriſt crucified?* ch. i. ver. 23. And in his latter, *We preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord?* ch. v. ver. 4."

We conſent to reſt the cauſe on this iſſue: to tread in his ſteps, to follow his example. Only preach you, juſt as St. *Paul* preached, and the diſpute is at an end.

For altho' we are certain he *preached Chriſt*, in as perfect a manner as the very chief of the apoſtles, yet who *preached the Law* more than St. *Paul?* therefore he did not think the goſpel anſwered the ſame end.

6. The very firſt ſermon of St. *Paul*, which is recorded, concludes in theſe words. *By Him all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which ye could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes. Beware therefore leſt*

that

at come upon you which is ſpoken of in the Prophets, Be-
old ye deſpiſers and wonder and periſh. For I work a
ork in your days, a work which you will in no wiſe be-
eve, tho' a man declare it unto you, Acts xiii. 39. *&c.*
ow it is manifeſt, all this is *preaching the Law*, in
e ſenſe wherein you underſtand the term: even al-
o' great part of, if not all his hearers, were either
ews or religious Proſelytes, ver. 43. and therefore pro-
ably many of them, in ſome degree at leaſt, convinc-
d of ſin already. He firſt reminds them, that they
ould not be juſtified by the Law of *Moſes*, but only by
ith in Chriſt: and then ſeverely threatens them with
e judgments of God, which is in the ſtrongeſt ſenſe
reaching the Law.

7. In his next diſcourſe, that to the Heathens at
yſtra, (ch. xiv. ver. 15, *&c.*) we do not find ſo much
s the name of Chriſt. The whole purport of it is,
hat they ſhould *turn from thoſe vain Idols, unto the living*
od. Now, confeſs the truth: Do not you think, if
ou had been there, you could have preached much
etter than he? I ſhould not wonder, if you thought
o, that his *preaching ſo ill*, occaſioned his being *ſo*
l treated: And that his being *ſtoned*, was a juſt judg-
ent upon him, for not *preaching Chriſt!*

8. To the Jaylor indeed, when he *ſprang in, and*
me trembling, and fell down before Paul *and* Silas, *and*
id, Sirs, What muſt I do to be ſaved, he immediately
id, Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. (ch. xvi. ver. 29,
c.) And in the caſe of one ſo deeply convinced of
n, who would not have ſaid the ſame? but to the men
Athens you find him ſpeaking in a quite different
anner, reproving their ſuperſtition, ignorance and
olatry; and ſtrongly moving them to repent, from the
nſideration of a future judgment, and of the reſur-
ction from the dead, (ch. xvii. ver. 24—31.) Like-
iſe *when* Felix *ſent for* Paul, on purpoſe that he might
ar him concerning the faith in Chriſt; inſtead of preach-
g Chriſt in *your* ſenſe (which would probably have
uſed the governor either to mock, or to contra-
ct and blaſpheme) *be reaſoned of righteouſneſs, tempe-*
nce and judgment to come, till *Felix* (hardened as he
was)

was) *trembled*, (ch. xxiv. ver. 24—25.) Go thou and tread in his ſteps. *Preach* Chriſt to the careleſs ſinner, by *reaſoning of righteouſneſs, temperance and judgment to come!*

9. If you ſay, "But he *preached Chriſt* in a different manner in his Epiſtles:" I anſwer, He did not there preach at all: not in that ſenſe wherein we ſpeak; for *preaching* in our preſent queſtion, means, ſpeaking before a congregation. But waving this, I anſwer, 2. His Epiſtles are directed, not to unbelievers, ſuch as thoſe we are now ſpeaking of, but *to the ſaints of God in Rome, Corinth, Philippi*, and other places. Now unqueſtionably he would ſpeak more of Chriſt to theſe, than to thoſe who were without God in the world. And yet 3. Every one of theſe is full of the law, even the Epiſtles to the *Romans* and the *Galatians:* in both of which he does what you term preaching the Law, and that to Believers as well as Unbelievers.

10. From hence 'tis plain, you know not what it is, to *preach Chriſt*, in the ſenſe of the Apoſtle. For doubtleſs St. *Paul* judged himſelf to be *preaching Chriſt*, both to *Felix*, and at *Antioch*, *Lyſtra*, and *Athens*. From whoſe example every thinking man muſt infer, That not only the declaring the love of Chriſt to ſinners, but alſo the declaring that he will come from Heaven in flaming fire, is, in the Apoſtle's ſenſe, *preaching Chriſt*: yea in the full ſcriptural meaning of the word. To *preach Chriſt*, is, To preach what he hath revealed, either in the old or new Teſtament: So that you are then as really preaching Chriſt, when you are ſaying, *The wicked ſhall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God*, as when you are ſaying, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world!*

10. Conſider this well: That to *preach Chriſt*, is to preach all things that Chriſt hath ſpoken; all his promiſes, all his threatnings and commands; all that is written in his book. And then you will know how to preach Chriſt, without making void the law.

11. "But does not the greateſt bleſſing attend thoſe diſcourſes, wherein we peculiarly preach the merits and ſufferings of Chriſt?"

Probably,

Probably, when we preach to a congregation of mourners, or of believers, theſe will be attended with the greateſt bleſſing; becauſe ſuch diſcourſes are peculiarly ſuited to their ſtate. At leaſt theſe will uſually convey the moſt comfort. But this is not always the greateſt bleſſing. I may ſometimes receive a far greater by a diſcourſe that cuts me to the heart and humbles me to the duſt. Neither ſhould I receive that comfort if I were to preach or to hear no diſcourſes but on the ſufferings of Chriſt. Theſe by conſtant repetition would loſe their force, and grow more and more flat and dead: Till at length they would become a dull round of words, without any ſpirit, or life, or virtue. So that thus to *preach Chriſt*, muſt in proceſs of time, make void the goſpel as well as the law.

II. 1. A ſecond way of *making void the law through faith*, is, the teaching that faith ſuperſedes the neceſſity of holineſs. This divides itſelf into a thouſand ſmaller paths: and many there are that walk therein. Indeed there are few that wholly eſcape it: few who are convinced, we *are ſaved by faith*, but are ſooner or later, more or leſs, drawn aſide into this bye-way.

2. All thoſe are drawn into this bye-way, who if it be not their ſettled judgment, that faith in Chriſt intirely ſets aſide the neceſſity of keeping his law, yet ſuppoſe either, 1. That holineſs is leſs neceſſary now than it was before Chriſt: or, 2. That a leſs degree of it is neceſſary; or, 3. That it is leſs neceſſary to believers, than to others. Yea, and ſo are all thoſe who altho' their judgment be right in the general, yet think they may take more liberty in particular caſes, than they could have done before they believed. Indeed the uſing the term *Liberty*, in ſuch a manner, for "liberty from obedience, or holineſs," ſhews at once, that their judgment is perverted, and that they are guilty of what they imagined to be far from them, namely of *making void the law thro' faith*, by ſuppoſing faith to ſuperſede holineſs.

3. The firſt plea of thoſe who teach this expreſſly is, that "we are now under the covenant of grace,

not works: And therefore we are no longer under the neceſſity of performing the works of the law."

And who ever was under the covenant of works? None but *Adam* before the fall. He was fully and properly under that covenant, which required perfect, univerſal obedience, as the one condition of acceptance; and left no place for pardon, upon the very leaſt tranſgreſſion. But no man elſe was ever under this, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither before Chriſt nor ſince. All his ſons were and are under the covenant of grace; the manner of their acceptance is this: The free grace of God thro' the merits of Chriſt, gives pardon to them that believe, that believe with ſuch a faith as working by love, produces all obedience and holineſs.

4. The caſe is not therefore as you ſuppoſe, that men were *once* more obliged to obey God, or to work the works of his law than they are *now*. This is a ſuppoſition you cannot make good. But, we ſhould have been obliged, if we had been under the covenant of works, to have done thoſe works antecedent to our acceptance. Whereas now all good works, tho' as neceſſary as ever, are not antecedent to our acceptance, but conſequent upon it. Therefore the nature of the covenant of grace, gives you no ground no encouragement at all, to ſet aſide any inſtance or degree of obedience, any part or meaſure of holineſs.

5. "But are we not *juſtified by faith, without the works of the law?*" Undoubtedly we are, without the works of either the ceremonial or the moral law. And would to God all men were convinced of this. It would prevent innumerable evils. Antinomianiſm, in particular; for generally ſpeaking, they are the phariſees who make the antinomians. Running into an extreme ſo palpably contrary to ſcripture, they occaſion others to run into the oppoſite one. Theſe ſeeking to be juſtified by works, affright thoſe from allowing any place for them.

6. But the truth lies between both. We are doubtleſs *juſtified by faith*. This is the corner-ſtone of the whole chriſtian building. We are *juſtified without the works of the law*, as any previous condition of juſtification

tion. But they are an immediate fruit of that faith, whereby we are juſtified. So that if good works do not follow our faith, even all inward and outward holineſs, it is plain our faith is nothing worth: We are yet in our ſins. Therefore, that *we are juſtified by faith*, even by *faith without works*, is no ground for *making void the law thro' faith*: or for imagining that faith is a diſpenſation, from any kind or degree of holineſs.

7. "Nay, but does not St. *Paul* expreſſly ſay, *Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs?* And does it not follow from hence, That faith is to a believer in the room, in the place of righteouſneſs? But if faith is in the room of righteouſneſs or holineſs, what need is there of this too?"

This, it muſt be acknowledged, comes home to the point, and is indeed the main pillar of antinomianiſm. And yet it needs not a long or laboured anſwer. We allow, 1. That God *juſtifies the ungodly*, him that till that hour is totally ungodly, full of all evil, void of all good. 2. That he *juſtifies the ungodly that worketh not*, that till that moment worketh no good work: neither can he; for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. 3. That he juſtifies him *by faith alone*, without any goodneſs or righteouſneſs preceding; and, 4. That *faith is* then *counted to him for righteouſneſs*, namely, for *preceding righteouſneſs*: i. e. God, thro' the merits of Chriſt, accepts him that believes, as if he had already fulfilled all righteouſneſs. But what is all this to your point? The Apoſtle does not ſay, either here or elſewhere, That this faith is counted to him for *ſubſequent righteouſneſs*. He does teach, That there is no righteouſneſs *before* Faith. But where does he teach, That there is none *after* it? He does aſſert, Holineſs cannot *precede* juſtification: But not, That it need not *follow* it. St. *Paul* therefore gives you no colour for *making void the law*, by teaching, that faith ſuperſedes the neceſſity of holineſs.

III. 1. There is yet another way of *making void the law thro' faith*, which is more common than either of the

the former. And that is, The doing it practically: The making it void in *Fact*, tho' not in *Principle*: The *living*, as if faith was designed to excuse us from holiness.

How earnestly does the apostle guard us against this, in those well known words: *What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!* Rom. vi. 15. A caution which it is needful throughly to consider, because it is of the last importance.

2. The being *under the law* may here mean, 1. The being obliged to observe the ceremonial law. 2. The being obliged to conform to the whole *Mosaic* institution. 3. The being obliged to keep the whole moral law, as the condition of our acceptance with God: and, 4. The being under the wrath and curse of God, under sentence of eternal death; under a sense of guilt and condemnation, full of horror and slavish fear.

3. Now altho' a Believer is *not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ*, yet from the moment he believes, he is not *under the Law*, in any of the preceding senses. On the contrary, he is *under grace*, under a more benign, gracious dispensation. As he is no longer under the ceremonial Law, nor under the *Mosaic* institution; as he is not obliged to keep even the Moral Law, as the condition of his acceptance: So he is delivered from the wrath and the curse of God, from all sense of guilt and condemnation, and from all that horror and fear of death and hell, whereby he was *all his life* before *subject to bondage*. And he now performs (which while *under the Law* he could not do) a willing and universal obedience. He obeys not from the motive of slavish fear, but on a nobler principle, namely, The Grace of God ruling in his heart, and causing all his works to be wrought in love.

4. What then? Shall this Evangelical Principle of Action, be less powerful than the Legal? Shall we be less obedient to God from filial Love, than we were from servile Fear?

'Tis well, if this is not a common case; if this practical antinomianism, this unobserved way of *making void*

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the Law through Faith, has not infected thouſands of Believers.

Has it not infected you? Examine yourſelf honeſtly and cloſely. Do you not now do, what you durſt not have done when you was *under the Law*, or (as we commonly call it) *under Conviction?* For inſtance. You durſt not then indulge yourſelf in food. You took juſt what was needful, and that of the cheapeſt kind. Do you not allow yourſelf more latitude now? Do you not indulge yourſelf a little more than you did? O beware, leſt you *ſin, becauſe you are not under the Law, but under Grace!*

5. When you was under conviction, you durſt not indulge the luſt of the Eye in any degree. You would not do any thing, great or ſmall, merely to gratify your curioſity. You regarded only cleanlineſs and neceſſity, or at moſt very moderate convenience, either in furniture or apparel; ſuperfluity and finery of whatever kind, as well as faſhionable elegance, were both a terror and an abomination to you.

Are they ſo ſtill? Is your conſcience as tender now in theſe things as it was then? Do you ſtill follow the ſame rule both in furniture and apparel, trampling all finery, all ſuperfluity, every thing uſeleſs, every thing merely ornamental, however faſhionable, under foot? Rather, Have you not reſumed what you had once laid aſide, and what you could not then uſe without wounding your conſcience? And have you not learned to ſay, "O, I am not *ſo ſcrupulous* now." I would to God you were! Then you would not *ſin* thus, *becauſe you are not under the Law but under Grace.*

6. You was once ſcrupulous too of commending any to their face, and ſtill more, of ſuffering any to commend *you.* It was a ſtab to your heart: you could not bear it: you ſought the honour that cometh of God only. You could not endure ſuch converſation: nor any converſation which was not good, to the uſe of edifying. All idle talk, all trifling diſcourſe you abhorred: you hated as well as feared it; being deeply ſenſible of the value of Time, of every precious, fleeting moment. In like manner you dreaded and abhor-

red idle expence; valuing your money only ſeſs than your time, and trembling leſt you ſhould be found an unfaithful ſteward even of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs.

Do you now look upon Praiſe as deadly poiſon, which you can neither give nor receive but at the peril of your Soul? Do you ſtill dread and abhor all converſation, which does not tend to the uſe of edifying; and labour to improve every Moment, that it may not paſs without leaving you better than it found you? Are not you leſs careful as to the expence both of Money and Time? Cannot you now lay out either, as you could not have done once? Alas! How has that *which ſhould have been for your health, proved to you an occaſion of falling?* How have you *ſinned, becauſe you was not under the Law, but under Grace!*

7. God forbid you ſhould any longer continue thus to *turn the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs!* O remember, how clear and ſtrong a conviction you once had, concerning all theſe things. And at the ſame time you was fully ſatisfied, from whom that conviction came. The World told you, you was in a deluſion: but you knew it was the voice of God. In theſe things you was not *too ſcrupulous* then; but you are not now *ſcrupulous enough.* God kept you longer in that painful ſchool, that you might learn thoſe great leſſons the more perfectly. And have you forgot them already? O recollect them, before it is too late. Have you ſuffered ſo many things in vain? I truſt, it is not yet in vain. Now uſe the conviction without the pain: Practiſe the Leſſon without the Rod. Let not the Mercy of God weigh leſs with you now, than his fiery indignation did before. Is Love a leſs powerful motive than Fear? If not, let it be an invariable rule, "I "will do nothing now I am *under grace*, which I durſt "not have done when *under the Law.*"

8. I cannot conclude this head, without exhorting you to examine yourſelf likewiſe touching Sins of Omiſſion. Are you as clear of theſe, now *you are under Grace*, as you was when *under the Law?* How diligent was you then in hearing the word of God? Did you neglect

neglect any opportunity? Did you not attend thereon day and night? Would a ſmall hindrance have kept you away? A little Buſineſs? a Viſitant? A ſlight Indiſpoſition? A ſoft Bed? A dark or cold morning? —Did not you then faſt often? Or uſe Abſtinence to the uttermoſt of your power? Was not you much in Prayer, (cold and heavy as you was) while you was hanging over the mouth of Hell? Did you not ſpeak and not ſpare, even for an unknown God? Did you not boldly plead his Cauſe? Reprove ſinners? And avow the Truth before an adulterous generation?— And are you now a Believer in Chriſt? Have you the *Faith that overcometh the World?* What! and are leſs zealous for your Maſter now, than you was when you knew him not? Leſs diligent in Faſting, in Prayer, in hearing his word, in calling Sinners to God? O Repent! See and feel your grievous loſs! Remember from whence you are fallen! Bewail your unfaithfulneſs! Now be zealous and do the firſt Works; leſt if you continue to *make void the Law through Faith*, God cut you off, and *appoint* you your *Portion with the Unbelievers?*

SER-

SERMON III.

The LAW Eſtabliſhed thro' Faith.

ROM. iii. 31.

Do we then make void the Law thro' Faith? GOD forbid! Yea, we eſtabliſh the Law.

IT has been ſhewn in the preceding diſcourſe, which are the moſt uſual ways of *making void the Law thro' Faith*: namely, Firſt, The not preaching it at all, which effectually makes it all void at a ſtroke: and this under colour of *preaching Chriſt* and magnifying the goſpel, tho' it be in truth, deſtroying both the one and the other: Secondly, The teaching (whether directly or indirectly) that Faith ſuperſedes the neceſſity of holineſs: that this is leſs neceſſary now, or a leſs degree of it neceſſary, than before Chriſt came: that it is leſs neceſſary to us, becauſe we believe, than otherwiſe it would have been: or, that chriſtian liberty is a liberty from any kind or degree of holineſs: (ſo perverting thoſe great truths, that we are now *under* the *covenant of grace* and not *of works*: that *a man is juſtified by faith, without the works of the Law*; and that *to him that worketh not but believeth, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs*:) or, Thirdly, The doing this practically; the making void the Law in practice tho' not in principle: the living or acting, as if faith was deſigned to excuſe us from holineſs: the allowing ourſelves in ſin, *becauſe we are not under the Law, but under Grace.* It remains

remains to enquire how we may follow a better pattern, how we may be able to say with the Apoſtle, *Do we then make void the Law thro' Faith? God forbid! Yea, we eſtabliſh the Law.*

2. We do not indeed eſtabliſh the old ceremonial Law: we know that this is aboliſhed for ever. Much leſs do we eſtabliſh the whole *Moſaic* diſpenſation. This we know, our Lord has *nailed to his croſs*. Nor yet do we ſo eſtabliſh the moral Law which it is to be feared too many do) as if the fulfilling it, the keeping all the commandments, were the condition of our juſtification. If it were ſo, ſurely *in his ſight, ſhould no man living be juſtified.* But all this being allowed, we ſtill in the Apoſtle's ſenſe *eſtabliſh the Law*, the moral Law.

I. 1. We *eſtabliſh the Law*, Firſt, By our doctrine; by endeavouring to preach it in its whole extent, to explain and inforce every part of it, in the ſame manner as our great Teacher did, while upon earth. We eſtabliſh it, by following St. *Peter*'s advice, *If any man ſpeak let him ſpeak as the oracles of God*; as the holy men of old moved by the Holy Ghoſt, ſpoke and wrote for our inſtruction, and as the Apoſtles of our bleſſed Lord by the direction of the ſame Spirit. We eſtabliſh it whenever we ſpeak in his name, by keeping back no thing from them that hear; by declaring to them without any limitation or reſerve, the whole counſel of God. And in order the more effectually to eſtabliſh it we uſe herein great plainneſs of ſpeech. *We are not as many that corrupt the word of God*, καπηλευουσι (as artful men their bad wines) we do not cauponize, mix, adulterate or ſoften it, to make it ſuit the taſte of the hearers. *But as of ſincerity, but as of God, in the ſight of God, ſpeak we in Chriſt:* as having no other aim, than *by manifeſtation of the truth*, to *commend ourſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God.*

2. We then by our doctrine eſtabliſh the Law, when we thus openly declare it to all men: and that, in the fulneſs wherein it is delivered by our bleſſed Lord and his Apoſtles: when we publiſh it in the height and depth and length and breadth thereof. We then eſtabliſh

ſh the Law, when we declare every part of it, every ommandment contained therein, not only in its full teral ſenſe, but likewiſe in its ſpiritual meaning: not nly with regard to the outward actions, which it ei- her forbids or enjoins: but alſo with reſpect to the ward principle, to the thoughts, deſires and intents f the heart.

3. And indeed this we do more diligently, not only ecauſe it is of the deepeſt importance; inaſmuch as l the fruit, every word and work, muſt be only evil ontinually, if the tree be evil, if the diſpoſitions and mpers of the heart, be not right before God: but kewiſe, becauſe as important as theſe things are, they re little conſidered or underſtood. So little, that we e may truly ſay of the Law too, when taken in its full piritual meaning, it is *a myſtery which was hid from ages nd generations ſince the world began.* It was utterly hid rom the heathen world. They, with all their boaſted iſdom, neither *found out God*, nor the Law of God, ot in the letter, much leſs in the ſpirit of it: *Their oliſh hearts were* more and more *darkened:* while *profeſ- ng themſelves wiſe, they became fools.* And it was almoſt qually hid, as to its ſpiritual meaning, from the bulk f the Jewiſh nation. Even theſe who were ſo ready to eclare concerning others, *this people that know not the aw, is accurſed*, pronounced their own ſentence herein, as being under the ſame curſe, the ſame dread- ul ignorance. Witneſs our Lord's continual reproof f the wiſeſt among them, for their groſs miſinterpre- tions of it. Witneſs the ſuppoſition almoſt univerſal- y received among them, that they needed only to make lean the outſide of the cup: that the paying tythe f Mint, Aniſe and Cummin, outward exactneſs, would tone for inward unholineſs; for the total neglect both f juſtice and mercy, of faith and the love of God. Yea, ſo abſolutely was the ſpiritual meaning of the aw hidden from the wiſeſt of them, that one of their oſt eminent Rabbis comments thus, on thoſe words f the Pſalmiſt, *If I incline unto iniquity with my heart, he Lord will not hear me:* that is, ſaith he, if it be nly in my heart, if I do not commit outward wicked-

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neſs, the Lord will not regard it; he will not puniſh me, unleſs I proceed to the outward act!

4. But alas! the Law of God, as to its inward ſpiritual meaning, is not hid from the Jews or Heathens only, but even from what is called the Chriſtian World; at leaſt, from a vaſt majority of them. The ſpiritual ſenſe of the commandments of God, is ſtill a myſtery to theſe alſo. Nor is this obſervable only in thoſe lands, which are overſpread with *Romiſh* darkneſs and ignorance. But this is too ſure, that the far greater part, even of thoſe, who are called *reformed Chriſtians*, are utter ſtrangers at this day to the Law of Chriſt, in the purity and ſpirituality of it.

5. Hence it is that to this day *the Scribes and Phariſees*, the men who have the Form but not the Power of Religion, and who are generally wiſe in their own eyes, and righteous in their own conceits; *hearing theſe things are offended*: are deeply offended, when we ſpeak of the Religion of the Heart, and particularly when we ſhew, that without this, were we to *give all our goods to feed the poor*, it would profit us nothing. But offended they muſt be: for we cannot but ſpeak the truth as it is in Jeſus. It is our part, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, to deliver our own ſoul. All that is written in the book of God we are to declare, not as pleaſing men, but the Lord. We are to declare not only all the promiſes, but all the threatnings too which we find therein. At the ſame time that we proclaim all the bleſſings and privileges, which God had prepared for his Children, we are likewiſe to *teach all the things whatſoever he hath commanded*. And we know that all theſe have their uſe; either for the awakening thoſe that ſleep, the inſtructing the ignorant, the comforting the feeble-minded, or the building up and perfecting of the Saints. We know that *all Scripture given by inſpiration of God, is profitable* either *for Doctrine*, or *for Reproof*, either *for correction* or *for inſtruction in Righteouſneſs:* And *that the Man of God*, in the proceſs of the Work of God in his Soul, has need of every part thereof, that he *may at length be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good Works*.

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6. It is our part thus to *preach Chriſt*, by preaching all things whatſoever he hath revealed. We may indeed without blame, yea, and with a peculiar bleſſing from God, declare the Love of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. We may ſpeak, in a more eſpecial manner, *of the Lord our Righteouſneſs*. We may expatiate upon the Grace of *God in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf*. We may, at proper opportunities, dwell upon his praiſe, as bearing *the iniquities of us all*, as *wounded for our tranſgreſſions* and *bruiſed for our iniquities*, that *by his ſtripes we* might *be healed*. But ſtill we ſhould not *preach Chriſt* according to his word, if we were wholly to confine ourſelves to this. We are not ourſelves clear before God, unleſs we proclaim him in all his offices. *To preach Chriſt*, as a Workman that needeth not to be aſhamed, is to preach him not only as our great *High-prieſt*, *taken from among Men, and ordained for man in things pertaining to God*; as ſuch, *reconciling us to God by his blood*, and *ever living to make interceſſion for us*: But likewiſe as the Prophet of the Lord, *who of God is made unto us Wiſdom*. Who by his Word, and his Spirit, *is with us always, guiding us into all Truth*: Yea, and as remaining a *King* for ever; as giving Laws to all whom he has bought with his blood: As reſtoring thoſe to the Image of God, whom he had firſt re-inſtated in his favour: as reigning in all believing hearts, until he has *ſubdued all things to himſelf*; until he hath utterly caſt out all Sin *and brought in everlaſting righteouſneſs*.

II. 1, *We eſtabliſh the law*, Secondly, when we ſo preach faith in Chriſt, as not to ſuperſede, but produce holineſs: To produce all manner of holineſs, negative and poſitive, of the heart and of the life.

In order to this, we continually declare (what ſhould be frequently and deeply conſidered, by all who would not *make void the law thro' faith*) that faith itſelf, even chriſtian faith, the faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God, ſtill is only the handmaid of love. As glorious and honourable as it is, it is not the end of the commandment. God hath given this honour to

love alone: Love is the end of all the commandments of God. Love is the end, the ſole end of every diſpenſation of God, from the beginning of the world to the conſummation of all things. And it will endure when heaven and earth ſhall flee away! for *love* alone *never faileth*. Faith will totally fail: It will be ſwallowed up in ſight, in the everlaſting viſion of God. But even then love

"Its nature and its office ſtill the ſame,
Laſting its lamp and unconſum'd its flame,
In deathleſs triumph ſhall for ever live,
And endleſs good diffuſe, and endleſs praiſe receive."

2. Very excellent things are ſpoken of faith, and whoſoever is a partaker thereof, may well ſay with the apoſtle, *Thanks be to God for his unſpeakable gift*. Yet ſtill it loſes all its excellence, when brought into a compariſon with love. What St. *Paul* obſerves concerning the ſuperior glory of the goſpel, above that of the law, may with great propriety be ſpoken of the ſuperior glory of love, above that of faith. *Even that which was made glorious, hath no glory in this reſpect, by reaſon of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away is glorious, much more doth that which remaineth exceed in glory.* Yea, all the glory of faith before it is done away, ariſes hence, That it miniſters to love. It is the great temporary means which God has ordained to promote that eternal end.

3. Let thoſe who magnify faith beyond all proportion, ſo as to ſwallow up all things elſe: and who ſo totally miſapprehend the nature of it, as to imagine it ſtands in the place of love, conſider farther, That as love will exiſt after faith, ſo it did exiſt long before it. The angels, who from the moment of their creation, beheld the face of their Father that is in heaven, had no occaſion for faith, in its general notion, as it is the evidence of things not ſeen. Neither had they need of faith in its more particular acceptation, faith in the blood of Jeſus: for he took not upon him the nature of angels,

but

but only the ſeed of *Abraham*. There was therefore no place before the foundation of the world, for faith either in the general or particular ſenſe. But there was for love. Love exiſted from eternity, in God, the great ocean of love. Love had a place in all the children of God, from the moment of their creation. They received at once from their gracious creator, to exiſt, and to love.

4. Nor is it certain (as ingeniouſly and plauſibly as many have deſcanted upon this) That faith, even in the general ſenſe of the word, had any place in paradiſe. It is highly probable, from that ſhort and uncircumſtantial account which we have in Holy Writ, That *Adam* before he rebelled againſt God, walked with him by ſight and not by faith.

> "For then his reaſon's eye was ſtrong and clear,
> And as an eagle can behold the ſun,
> Might have beheld his Maker's face as near,
> As th' intellectual angels could have done."

He was then able to talk with Him face to face, whoſe face we cannot now ſee and live. And conſequently had no need of that faith, whoſe office it is to ſupply the want of ſight.

5. On the other hand, it is abſolutely certain, faith in its particular ſenſe had then no place. For in that ſenſe it neceſſarily preſuppoſes ſin, and the wrath of God declared againſt the ſinner: Without which there is no need of an atonement for ſin, in order to the ſinner's reconciliation with God. Conſequently as there was no need of an atonement before the fall, ſo there was no place for faith in that atonement: Man being then pure from every ſtain of ſin, holy as God is holy. But love even then filled his heart. It reigned in him without a rival. And it was only when love was loſt by ſin, that faith was added, not for its own ſake, nor with any deſign, that it ſhould exiſt any longer, than until it had anſwered the end for which it was ordained namely, To reſtore man, to the love from which he was

fallen. At the fall therefore was added this evidence of things unſeen, which before was utterly needleſs; This confidence in redeeming love, which could not poſſibly have any place, till the promiſe was made, that the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head.

6. Faith then was originally deſigned of God, to re-eſtabliſh the law of love. Therefore in ſpeaking thus, we are not undervaluing it, or robbing it of its due praiſe: But on the contrary ſhewing its real worth, exalting it in its juſt proportion, and giving it that very place which the wiſdom of God aſſigned it from the beginning. It is the grand means of reſtoring that holy love, wherein man was originally created. It follows, that altho' faith is of no value in itſelf (as neither is any other means whatſoever) yet as it leads to that end, the eſtabliſhing anew the law of love in our hearts, and as, in the preſent ſtate of things, it is the only means under heaven for effecting it: It is, on that account, an unſpeakable bleſſing to man, and of unſpeakable value before God.

III. 1. And this naturally brings us to obſerve, Thirdly, The moſt important way of *eſtabliſhing the law*: Namely, The eſtabliſhing it in our own hearts and lives. Indeed without this, what would all the reſt avail? We might eſtabliſh it by our doctrine; we might preach it in its whole extent, might explain and inforce every part of it. We might open it in its moſt ſpiritual meaning and declare the myſteries of the kingdom: We might preach Chriſt in all his offices, and faith in Chriſt, as opening all the treaſures of his love. And yet all this time, if the law we preached, were not eſtabliſhed in our hearts, we ſhould be of no more account before God, than *ſounding braſs or tinkling cymbals*. All our preaching would be ſo far from profiting ourſelves, that it would only increaſe our damnation.

2. This is therefore the main point to be conſidered, How may we eſtabliſh the Law in our own hearts, ſo that it may have its full influence on our lives? And this can only be done by Faith.

Faith

Faith alone it is, which effectually anſwers this end, as we learn from daily experience. For ſo long as we walk by faith not by ſight, we go ſwiftly on in the way of holineſs. While we ſteadily look, not at the things which are ſeen, but at thoſe which are not ſeen, we are more and more crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us. Let but the eye of the ſoul be conſtantly fixed, not on the things which are temporal, but on thoſe which are eternal, and our affections are more and more looſened from earth, and fixed on things above. So that Faith in general is the moſt direct and effectual means of promoting all righteouſneſs and true Holineſs: of eſtabliſhing the holy and ſpiritual Law, in the hearts of them that believe.

3. And by Faith, taken in its more particular meaning, for a confidence in a pardoning God, we eſtabliſh his Law in our own Hearts, in a ſtill more effectual manner. For there is no motive which ſo powerfully inclines us to love God, as the ſenſe of the love of God in Chriſt. Nothing enables us like a piercing conviction of this, to give our hearts to Him who was given for us. And from this principle of grateful Love to GOD ariſes Love to our Brother alſo. Neither can we avoid loving our Neighbour, if we truly believe the Love wherewith God hath loved us. Now this Love to Man grounded on Faith and Love to God, *worketh no ill to our neighbour.* Conſequently it is (as the apoſtle obſerves) *the fulfilling of the* whole negative Law. *For this, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery, Thou ſhalt not kill, Thou ſhalt not ſteal, Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs, Thou ſhalt not covet: And if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this ſaying, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.* Neither is Love content with barely working no evil to our neighbour. It continually incites us to do good: as we have time and opportunity, to do good in every poſſible kind and in every poſſible degree to all men. It is therefore the fulfilling of the poſitive likewiſe, as well as of the negative Law of God.

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4. Nor does faith fulfil either the negative or positive law, as to the external part only: But it works inwardly by love, to the purifying of the heart, the cleansing it from all vile affections. *Every one that hath this* faith *in himself, purifieth himself even as he is pure:* purifieth himself from every earthly, sensual desire, from all vile and inordinate affections: Yea, from the whole of that carnal mind, which is enmity against God. At the same time, if it have its perfect work, it fills him with all goodness, righteousness and truth. It brings all heaven into his soul, and causes him to walk in the light even as God is in the light.

5. Let us then endeavour to establish the Law in ourselves: Not sinning *because we are under grace*, but rather using all the power we receive thereby, *to fulfil all righteousness*. Calling to mind what Light we received from God, while his Spirit was convincing us of Sin, let us beware we do not put out that light; what we had then attained let us hold fast. Let nothing induce us to build again what we have destroyed; to resume any thing, small or great which we then clearly saw was not for the glory of God, or the profit of our own soul: or to neglect any thing, small or great, which we could not then neglect, without a check from our own conscience. To increase and perfect the light which we had before, let us now add the light of Faith. Confirm we the former gift of God, by a deeper sense of whatever he had then shewn us: by a greater tenderness of conscience, and a more exquisite sensibility of sin. Walking now with joy and not with fear, in a clear, steady sight of Things Eternal, we shall look on pleasure, wealth, praise, all the things of earth, as on bubbles upon the water: counting nothing important, nothing desirable, nothing worth a deliberate thought, but only what is *within the veil*, where *Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God*.

6. Can *you* say, *Thou art merciful to* my *unrighteousness: My sins thou remembereſt no more?* Then for the time

time to come, ſee that you fly from ſin, as from the face of a ſerpent. For how exceeding ſinful does it appear to you now? How heinous above all expreſſion? On the other hand, in how amiable a light do you now ſee the holy and perfect Will of God? Now therefore labour that it may be fulfilled, both in you, by you and upon you. Now watch and pray that you may ſin no more, that you may ſee and ſhun the leaſt tranſgreſſion of his law. You ſee the motes which you could not ſee before, when the ſun ſhines into a dark place. In like manner, you ſee the ſins which you could not ſee before, now the Sun of Righteouſneſs ſhines in your heart. Now then do all diligence to walk in every reſpect, according to the Light you have received. Now be zealous to receive more light daily, more of the knowledge and Love of God, more of the Spirit of Chriſt, more of his Life, and of the power of his Reſurrection. Now uſe all the Knowledge and Love and Life and Power you have already attained. So ſhall you continually go on from Faith to Faith. So ſhall you daily increaſe in holy Love, 'till Faith is ſwallowed up in ſight, and the Law of Love eſtabliſhed to all eternity.

FINIS.